



BLM NEWS RELEASE

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Bureau of Land Management
For immediate release

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Date: July 18, 2014

Bureau of Land Management Fire Program to Focus on Sage-Grouse Conservation

As an integral part of its collaborative efforts with the states and other federal agencies to conserve sage grouse habitat and that of more than 350 other wildlife species including mule deer and pronghorn antelope who share habitat, the Bureau of Land Management announced today that it is making sage grouse habitat protection a high natural resource priority, focusing its hazardous fuels program on areas where fire management for sage-grouse habitat protection is most critical. These areas are primarily located in priority habitat in the Great Basin states with the highest probability of wildfire occurrence.

Earlier this week, lightning storms passing through Oregon and Central Idaho ignited multiple fires, several of which are burning sage grouse habitat areas. As of this morning, the Buzzard Fire in Eastern Oregon is estimated to have burned 300,000 acres, of which, at least in part, is Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. The Twin Fire and the Lamb Fire also are burning in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat areas. Nearby in the Vale District, the Saddle Fire is likely affecting Greater Sage-Grouse habitat as well.

“This week’s fires in the West highlight the fact that wildfire is a significant threat to a healthy and sustainable sage-grouse habitat,” BLM Deputy Director Steve Ellis said. “After firefighter and public safety, the BLM will focus its fire program on protecting, preserving and enhancing sage grouse habitat.”

The management of fire and hazardous fuels in protecting and enhancing sage brush habitat is one of the factors the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will consider in deciding whether the Greater Sage-Grouse warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act. By protecting and enhancing this habitat, the BLM is also supporting other populations of sage grouse, including the Gunnison Sage Grouse, Bi-State Sage Grouse, and Columbia Basin distinct population sub-groups of the bird.

As part of this process, the BLM will also take a number of preventative actions, including creating fuel breaks to limit the spread of fires; coordinating locally to reduce fuel loads and wildfire starts along travel corridors; pre-positioning firefighting resources to quickly respond to one or multiple fires; and expanding the training and use of Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, Rural Fire Departments and other local, non-federal agency individuals as liaisons in wildland fire detection and suppression operations. Funding will support the planning and implementation of fuels treatments in order to reduce the start and spread of wildfires in sage grouse habitat. At the same time, the BLM will continue to provide a robust hazardous fuels program across the West.

President Obama’s FY 2015 Budget also includes a request for \$30 million for the Resilient Landscapes Initiative. Some of these funds may be used to supplement hazardous fuels project work within the BLM.

Further details about the proposal are available in WO-IM-2014-114, Sage-Grouse Habitat and Wildland Fire Management. Please note the link will be provided here as soon as it is available.

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 western states, including Alaska.

The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to manage and conserve the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations under our mandate of multiple-use and sustained yield. In Fiscal Year 2013, the BLM generated \$4.7 billion in receipts from public lands.

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